



LEARNING DIARY

Fanny Kajela

Experimental Design (MUD-E5043)



Week 1

other-than-human creature.

House sparrow

- close to my home
- abundant in numbers,
- feels very regular / every day
- even though I see it often, I haven't ever thought about it much / taken a closer look
- their existence keeps me closer to nature even in the city

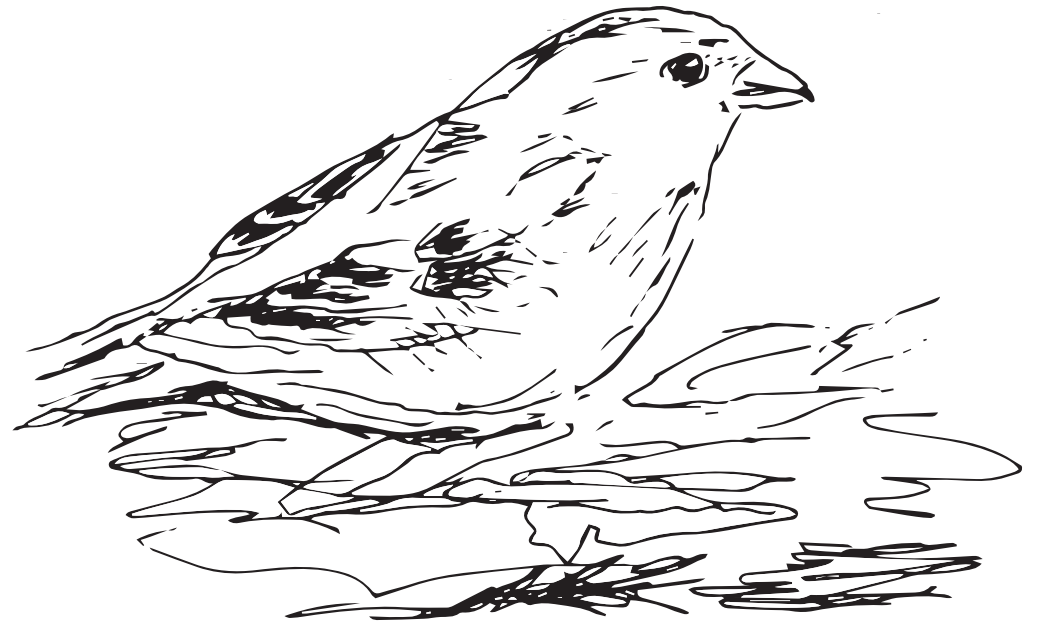
Lecture: Introduction to course

Feral data

- excited about different ways to collect data
 - boring graphs and charts are often not engaging
 - lack of feeling
 - info + emotion = deeper understanding

de-centering humans

- how to do this?
- what I create stems from me, my thoughts, best intentions, knowledge of a creature / situation
 - giving room for other-than-human creatures
 - giving the voiceless a voice
 - how could it ever truly be their voice and not a simplified interpretation?



Nunks.0 26 10

agency in nature

- > power dynamic between human and other-than human
- tensions between creatures, in a place
- partners in nature
 - symbiosis in creation
 - > is this possible with humans?
 - > give and take
 - > most wholly we take and are not willing or able to give back in a meaningful way

Drifting

My prompt was something like.

"Crush a dried leaf in your hand and smell it. What do you smell?"

- drifting was exiting, if not challenging at times
 - > my prompt was so simple, I had to get creative with it
 - > I tried different leaves of different trees + various levels of wetness
 - > the smells were similar all various shades of decay and earth

- what was most interesting about the prompt was that focusing on one sense automatically led to focusing on the others

-> I was engaging with the nature with touch in a much more uninhibited way than I would normally

- when purposefully focusing on something in our surroundings, you notice so much more than you would on when just going about your day

-> I want to bring this mentality of drifting more into my every-day

-> we miss so much when always in a hurry and going from place to place

- must remember to STOP more

- I have gotten better at being present and patient in nature through bird-watching

- heightened focus on the sense of sight and hearing are required

-> I haven't taken this mentality into just going about my day when I am not purposefully out to be in nature, but on the bus or walking from place to place

-> EVERY MOMENT CAN BE A DRIFTING MOMENT



Week 2

FERAL: less what
more why & how

- Feral data can be just as meaningful
as more "traditionally" gathered data

→ emotion based data is not any
less real than objective,
measured data

→ how to get people to accept
feral modes of data gathering
as legitimate?

→ easing into it?

- Feral data
defies traditional
concept of
data

→ basing feral knowledge into
something more
recognizable

READING CIRCLE:

- how to define
when data
becomes data?

→ if a feeling
can be thought
of as data,
when does it
become data?

→ when it's
recorded by
text or sound?

- does data need to
be recorded in order
to be data

→ would that sacrifice
the feral nature?

collecting data
of the body and mind

→ stored in
memory and the
body

→ often no record
for anyone to
read or hear

More-than-human place:

Bushes outside of Kallio church

WHY I CHOSE THIS PLACE:

- birds in my home environment
→ everyday encounters

- way to connect to other species
→ easy access bird-watching

- sparrows are interesting
→ they appear only in cities
and other residential area
→ adapted to co-living
with humans

- co-habitation with humans
→ dependency of humans
and bird-feeding
→ what is their natural
behavior?
→ what do they gain
from us?
→ what do they think of us?

comments and thoughts regarding MTH-place:

- who is the pest?
 - the bird or the human
- metal fence as a substitute for the hedge that was cut down
 - sparrows adapting to human-made changes by taking over human structures?
- who feeds the birds?
 - who is responsible?
- what do the sparrows gain other than food?
 - do they like us?
 - do we interpret their actions/behaviour as attachment when it is not?
 - we mirror our attachment into their behaviour
- what happens when the feeding stops and the bushes are cut down?



Week 3

HOUSE SPARROW RESEARCH

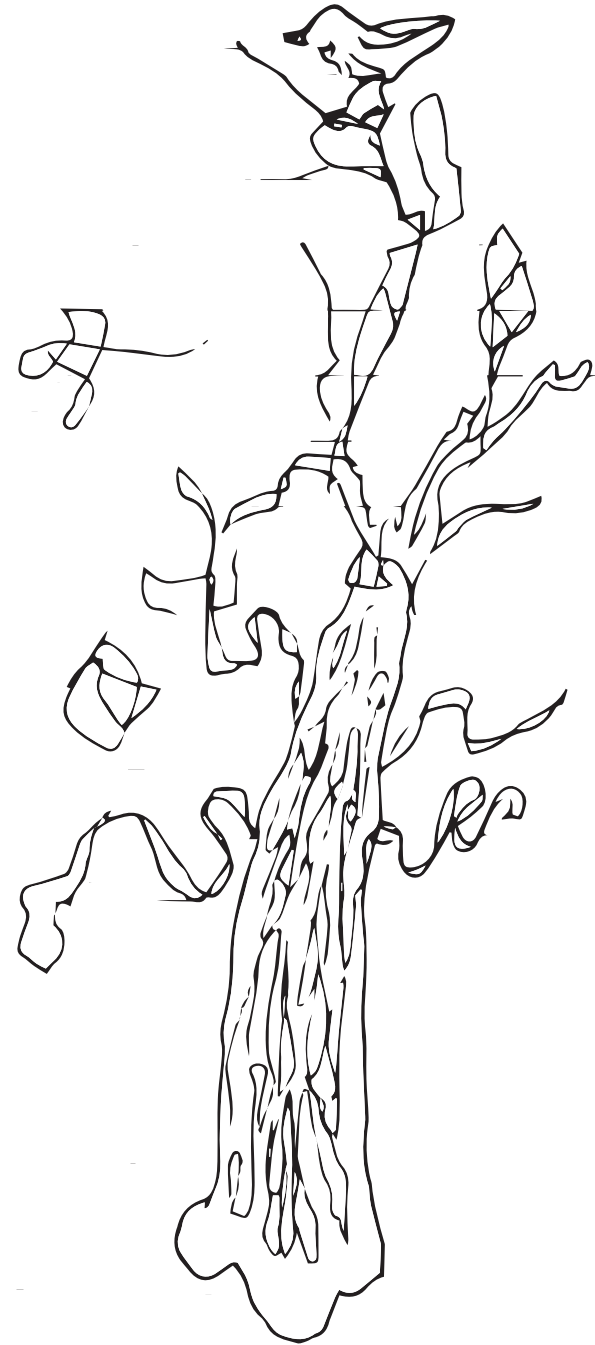
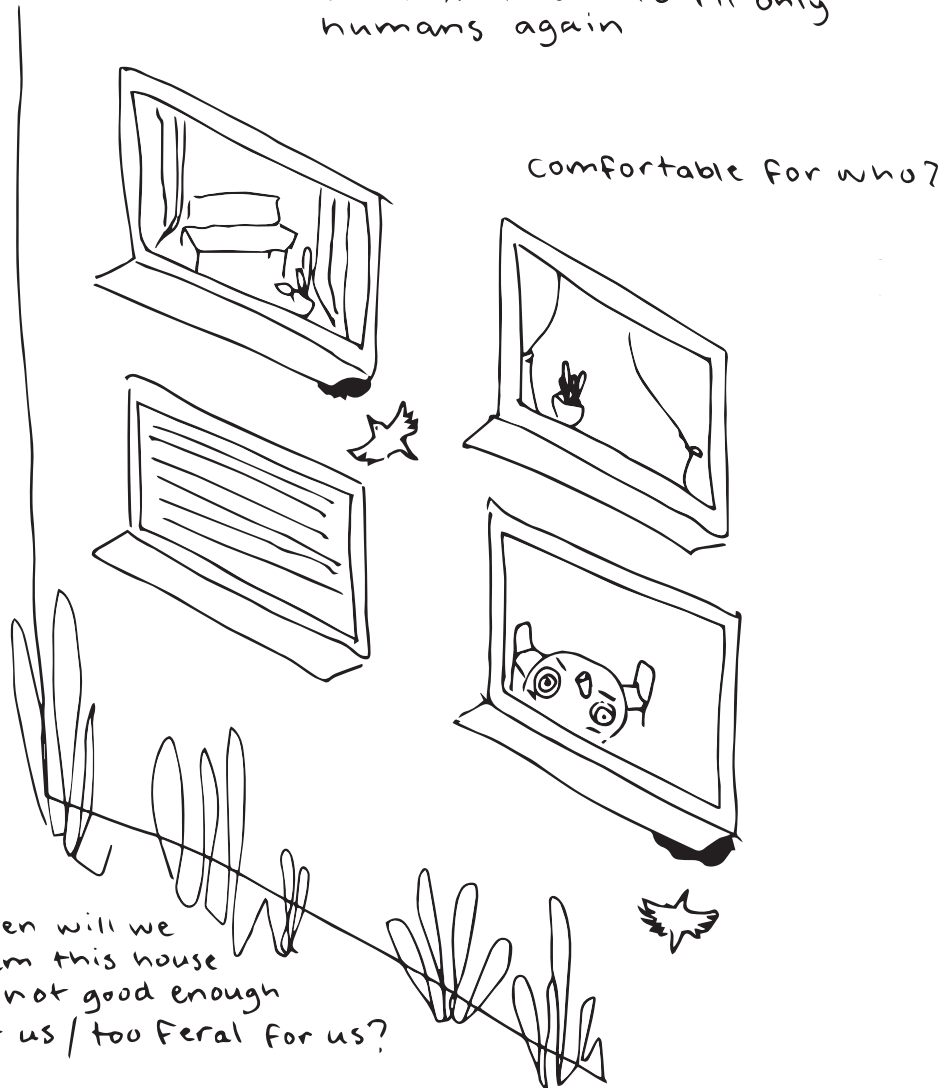
- population has decreased 70% in the last 40 years
- species decline largest of all bird species in Europe
- less habitats in new buildings
 - sparrows nest in holes in buildings
- lessening popularity of bird-feeding and growing rowan hedges has attributed to population decline
- seemingly small thing such as switching roofing material from ~~3~~ tile to sheet metal has been speculated to be one reason for lessening of ~~3~~ house sparrow numbers
- a problem in protecting the house sparrows is the lack of knowledge of their situation and a lack of interest
 - ↓
- through research into the house sparrow I have realized that their existence is so much more complicated than I had thought.
 - I picked this creature because it is one I see often and have not thought much about, I, like many others it seems, have taken this creature for granted.

IDEAS:

- o What would a reality without house sparrows look and sound like?
- o How to make people care about the house sparrow?
 - appealing to emotion?
 - creating a narrative
- o video showcasing their environment
 - inside the bush
- o the changing of trends affecting the sparrow population
 - how could decisions be made to benefit more than mostly aesthetic human wants?
 - benefit more-than-humans
- o tool for information
- o if people don't benefit, how to make them care
 - how to make them understand that protecting other species and biodiversity in general is benefitting them?

Human environments that were never designed to include other creatures

→ when they degrade into conditions that allow other creatures to inhabit it, we either demolish them or fix them to fit only humans again



ABOUT MORE-THAN-HUMAN CO-CREATION

I find this idea of nothing being fixed and everything being in an eternal state of change to be super interesting

→ reminds me to not have a fixed idea of what to expect when co-creating with more-than-human beings

↓
relates to acknowledging the different life-spans of different creatures

→ how does an hour feel like to me vs. a sparrow

while co-creation still feels somewhat of a question mark in practice, what comforts me is its metaphorical nature

- not approaching it literally

+

thinking of how to listen to other creatures in a beyond auditory sense

+ what is not being expressed

→ is there more immediacy in their life because it is shorter

→ then again, it doesn't feel shorter to them surely, who would they compare to?

→ once again I feel myself imposing my humanness onto the sparrows and assuming their experience

→ is it possible to detach from my humanness?

the more you know about a creature, the more you care about it?

SOUNDSCAPING WORKSHOP

- how do different species sense the world, hear it, feel it, smell it
- our senses adapting to the environment
 - from city to forest
 - takes a while to start hearing or smelling more
- how much do we miss with our human ears and eyes?
 - mirroring how we sense to other species
 - diminishing the experience of other creatures
 - simplifying their experience by humanizing it
- I wonder how the cutting of a hedge, a home sounds to the sparrows?
 - how does it feel?
- trying to purposefully listen to my environment feels like a sort of drifting

IDEA FOR VIDEO:

- creating narrative with sound and silence
 - what does the sparrows life sound like, what does their absence sound like?

Week 4

MEETING THE PERSON WHO FEEDS THE SPARROWS IN KALLIO

- I had speculated that the feeding was being done by either the church or the fire station
 - turned out to be a lone person doing it
- they told me that the church and fire station are not pleased by the birds and the feeding
 - tensions between the sparrows and neighbouring institutions
- this person does the feeding because they know the sparrows need it despite there being signs banning feeding
- sparrows thought of as pests
 - their feeding attracts rats (some people fear)
 - who are the sparrows harming / who are even the rats harming?
 - categorized as unwanted nature by what we deem comfortable
- no matter what any human wants in terms of who gets to live in "their" environment, the sparrows need the feeding in order to survive the winter
 - what is more important: human comfort or the lives of sparrows?

FIRST TIME FILMING SPARROWS (observations)

- you can feel how they are used to humans
 - staying close to them doesn't bother them
- they fly off quickly if you get too close but fly back just as quickly
- they stay mainly in the bushes or trees
 - rarely can you see them interacting with human structures
 - less than I had expected
- busiest where the feeders are
- I don't know if I'm seeing something more than I was expecting
 - maybe would require more time with them
- do I feel like I'm in the spirit of co-creation?
 - do the sparrows know they are being filmed
 - they must sense that a human is present
 - would they act differently if I wasn't there?



Week 5

THOUGHTS GOING INTO CONSULTATION

- I have gathered so much information about the house sparrow, I feel a bit overwhelmed by it
- need to find the right narrative for my feral artifact (video)
 - choosing between perspective of feeding or the loss of environments in cities (cutting of hedge)
- Feeling unable to eliminate my own humanness in the process of co-creation
 - getting stuck being aware of how little I know and can know as a human
 - not feeling as comfortable writing as I usually do
 - writing from human perspective
- Feeling slightly underwhelmed from filming the sparrows
 - not as much interaction with human structures as I had anticipated



AFTER CONSULTATION

- Finding the central question
 - what do I want to say with the video?
- spending time with the sparrows with intention even if there isn't much time
 - taking what I can get
- asking more questions
 - okay to leave things in a fog
 - okay to not have answers
- thinking of direction for narrative
 - poetic
- being ok with being human and not trying to fully eliminate my humanness
 - it is impossible anyways
 - trying to not let it stop me from going forward
- embrace the the filming sessions for what they are
 - try not to go into it with expectations
 - you won't be able to see the sparrows for what they are if you are waiting for them to do what you expect them to do

Week 6

FINAL FILMING SESSIONS

- Filming with a different lens to what I had used made a surprising difference to the experience
 - new lens allowed me to film sparrows closer
 - felt like I was getting closer to their reality / seeing them more for who they are
 - being able to film small details like their breath or sunlight shining through their wings left me in awe
- a person came up to me and asked whether I was filming rats
 - we got into a bit of a disagreement on whether there should be a rule against feeding birds and whether the rule should be followed
 - I said no, she said yes
 - these rules don't take into account the life of the sparrows, just about keeping rats away
 - rules should not be blindly followed without questioning whether it was even set with the bigger picture in mind
 - wellbeing of entire ecosystem, not just humans
- the more time I spent with the sparrows, the more they started to feel like my pals ♥
 - more connection to my home environment
 - waking up to sense more more-man-human life around

I WANT TO SHOW THIS BEAUTY TO EVERYONE!

BRINGING EVERYTHING TOGETHER

- question of narrative
 - best to keep it simple, can be more effective
- I have so many thoughts and was planning on speaking in the video, in order to give context to the situation with the sparrows
 - it will be too overpowering / overshadowing the sparrows
 - I want to give them room & get people to focus only on them
 - show their life, their beauty
- creating the narrative with visuals and sounds
 - I want to work with the visual contrast of the sparrows in the hedges and elsewhere being active and lively with the visual of the cut hedge ~~to~~ that is lacking of life and movement
 - communicating the affect of stripping environments from the sparrows
 - supporting this communication with accompanying gentle recorded sounds of the sparrows with visuals of them being active + stripping all sounds when showing the cut hedge to aid in feeling of silence and emptiness
- communicating the length of cut hedge by walkings and taking camera with me
 - bringing in the human
 - understanding how much of the sparrows habitat was cut down
- backstory and context from essay
 - chaotic feeling? unease conveying distress

TAKEAWAYS

→ I think the most valuable thing I learned was that sometimes it's okay to not have answers, only questions

→ especially with more-than-human life, sometimes it feels like there are only questions

→ I've learned to get comfortable not having answers to many things

→ asking questions is way more interesting anyways

→ questions build paths and let the mind wander & get creative

OK TO LEAVE THINGS IN A FOG

one thing I struggled with was dealing with my own humanness when co-creating with other-than-human species

→ I felt like I had to eliminate it

→ of course turned out to be impossible, it is what I am

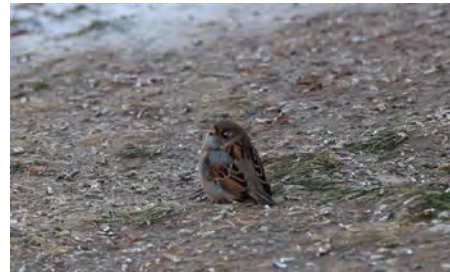
→ I can't and don't need to eliminate it, I just need to be aware of it and be mindful of it when acting with or for other-than-human creatures

when focusing solely on the non-human while filming & observing, I almost disregarded the human interactions which turned out to be one of the most interesting parts of the process

I also learned about the importance of being aware of and disregarding expectations in more-than-human co-creation

→ I went in with expectations of what I was going to see of the house sparrow's behaviour and was underwhelmed when it didn't meet my expectations

→ only when I left my expectations at home, did I start to see their reality and how it was interwoven by so many different factors



expectations limit experiences and put on blinders that keep from seeing the whole picture

learning about the house sparrows reminded to look deeper into things that seem ordinary and to never take nature for granted